

## A CASE FOR A DUAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN BOTSWANA

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### **Abstract**

*The Faculty of Humanities of the University of Botswana put forth a task force to look into challenges facing the Faculty. The challenges are multiple. My argument in this submission is that it is urgent to assess the whole education system and make it fit for the integrating, globalising world. The aims would be to move away from a theory based education system to one that combines theory and practice and tailor it to job markets. I argue that the Swiss education system would be a good template.*

Recently (2017), the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Botswana constituted a Task Force to look into the challenges facing the Faculty : low student numbers, unattractive courses and programmes, etc. This is a commendable approach . These challenges, however, could involve a much broader institution, namely the national education system by being fundamentally a theory based system. To address these challenges effectively, it would mean to move from a radically theory based education system to one that combines theory and practice, thus making it more oriented to job markets.

In order to succeed in this endeavour, however, it is important that, first and foremost, a radical switch in the thinking process regarding education in Botswana has to be envisaged. The widespread mind-set that the optimal socio-economic standard, which points to a smart dressed person sitting behind a desk, cannot be the goal. The value of vocational training & craftsmanship in the make-up of an individual who is socially & economically empowered should be defined and emphasized, to make them as attractive and gratifying as the academic. In this sense, the dual education system practiced by Switzerland offers a good example (*Das Bildungswesen in der Schweiz*, Bundesamt 2011).

### **The example of the Swiss education system**

The Swiss education system promotes a relatively early referral of the secondary students - at the end of the compulsory school years, the equivalent of Form 3 in Botswana - to different professional options ( electrician, brick-layer, butcher, painter, plumber , baker, carpenter, doctor's assistant, receptionist, marketing, etc ). This process is associated with an aggressive and interesting participation of the businesses. The outcomes would be : learning awareness, skills, motivations in the short term ; action, practice, behaviour, decision making in the medium term ; social, economic, civic environmental, understanding and security in community and society impacts in the long term. In this way, a large percentage of gratified

and skilled craftsmen will be ready for the job market. A relatively low percentage will enter the universities.

Upper secondary level : after the end of their compulsory school years ( the equivalent of Form 3 in Botswana), roughly **two-thirds** of adolescents in Switzerland switch to a form of education which combines classroom instruction at a vocational school with an apprenticeship in small, medium or large size enterprises (dual-track system). This provides them with a VET ( Vocational Education and Training) Certificate. This can also be concluded with a State Vocational baccalaureate. The remaining third opts for the continuing education at an upper secondary specialised school or at a baccalaureate school, which prepares them for tertiary education at a university.

About 90% of the youth complete upper secondary education which facilitates direct entry into the job market. It allows them at the same time to continue their education at a university.

Tertiary level : The tertiary level comprises universities (incl. Universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education) and, as a second pillar, institutions providing professional education and training. The latter is aimed at people with professional experience, enabling them to gain specialist education and additional qualifications.

45% of adults obtain a tertiary education degree or diplomas, 30% from a university, 15% from an institution of professional education and training (PET).

Such a model of education can be practised at the University level as well . This how it can be done :

- Align structures and processes with performances (outputs) and impacts (outcomes) ;
- Take socio-economic status into account on the local and national Educational reporting.

### **The role and contribution of the academic staff members**

The Department of French at the University of Botswana, which I know best for having lectured there for more than 14 years and been its head of department for six years, could do more to adapt the contents of programmes and make them more attractive and more oriented to the job market.

Our department has excellent assets: mostly young, diverse, motivated and well-trained lecturers from the best universities overseas. In our teaching-learning process, however, the focus is put more on programmes structures (methodologies & assessments) than effectiveness in terms of specific practical aims & objectives ( individual performance ability, local, national socio-economic needs) : « The ability to speak another of the world's most widely used languages » should not be the sole objective. As each economy around the world becomes increasingly international, the need and demand for foreign languages continues to grow. The importance of foreign language proficiency for graduates cannot be underestimated, as a recent report from the influential *Economist Intelligence Unit* underlined:

« Even when recruiting for jobs in their home market, almost one-half of all companies say that prospective candidates need to be fluent in a foreign language, and a further 13% say that multilingual ability is a key selection criterion [based on a 2012 survey targeted at 572 executives in Europe, Asia, North America and Latin America]. » (Student *Planning Guide*, 2014 Edition).

Additionally, a European Commission study showed that more than half of Europeans (53%) use languages at work and 45% think they got a better job in their own country thanks to their foreign language skills associated with targeted practical purposes to enhance career opportunities.

The ability to speak a foreign language can often boost earnings, sometimes adding as much as 15% to a person's salary in the US, 34% in India, and 55% in Thailand ! ( See *Student Planning Guide*, 2014 Edition).

The courses to be taken for a Degree in French should be organically linked to career opportunities. This should involve a well tailored programme which promotes an early referral of students - **from 2<sup>nd</sup> year on** - to different performance options : A student, with an interest in teaching French in secondary schools or at the University level, should attend French language, Francophone cultures and civilizations courses, but also be able to go and observe classes at schools for 1-2 hours weekly throughout his/her learning process. A student interested in advertising/marketing should be provided with the vocabulary and concepts associated with advertising/marketing in the classrooms as well as a few hours practice weekly in an advertising/marketing agency . The same for a student who is interested in hospitality or hotel industry. Study to join the diplomatic world requires a trans-disciplinary programme combining French, International Relations and Political Science. In addition, such a student should be familiarized with the International Relations through a steady apprenticeship at Government or private International Relations organisations.

Here, the benefits of the French language, Francophone cultures and civilizations education are immense. These would involve cultural understanding and global awareness, enhancement of abstract and creative thinking ; enrichment and enhancement of cognitive skills and emotional development ; benefits of understanding and security in community, society and the larger world.

## References

1. *Das Bildungswesen in der Schweiz*, Bundesamt, Bern, 2011. <https://swisseducation.educa.ch/en>
2. *Student Planning Guide*, 2014. [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/2014-erasmus-plus-programme-guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/2014-erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf)